

# AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGLISH, CARIBBEAN ENGLISH CREOLES, AND NORTH AMERICAN ENGLISH: PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR GENESES

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## 1. Introduction

In this largely programmatic paper I discuss aspects of the geneses of, on the one hand, African-American English (AAE) and its creole kin in the Caribbean, such as Jamaican and Guyanese Creoles, and, on the other, North American English. For convenience, I use the term "African-American English" more or less in the way Stewart (1968) used "Negro (nonstandard) English" and Dillard (1972) "Black English," without distinguishing between Gullah, traditionally identified as a creole, and African-American vernacular English (AAVE), which has been identified recently by Holm (1989, 1991) and Schneider (1990) as a "semi-creole." There are several reasons for lumping Gullah and AAVE together—aside from the fact that they are both vernaculars (see below)—but I will articulate only three of them that are relevant to this paper.

First, I am concerned here with changes undergone by English as it was being appropriated as a vernacular (i.e., language variety used for day-to-day communication, starting with the home) by descendants of Africans in the New World. I submit, as in Mufwene (to appear-a), that although the new vernaculars do not differ from their lexifier to the same extent nor in exactly the same features, they are outputs of basically the same restructuring equation. Structural differences among them resulted from differing values assigned to variables of the equation by the ethnographic-ecological conditions of the settings of their developments. I mean by "ethnographic-ecological conditions" the particular language varieties that came in contact, typological differences among them, the demographic proportions of their speakers, and the order of arrival of their speakers, among a host of factors that determined which structural options would be selected into the emerging new linguistic systems. Each of these relevant factors is treated as a variable of the equation whose precise formulation is still elusive.

Second, from the point of view of historical and genetic linguistics, the restructuring that produced these new vernaculars is systemic change, regardless of how extensive it is. It should also matter very little whether the relevant changes have resulted in a variety identified as a "dialect of the lexifier" or in one called "creole." Since dialects need not be typologically identical, nor can creoles be defined structurally (Mufwene 1986a), I espouse Hjelmslev's (1938) and Posner's (1975) position that creoles are dialects of their lexifiers. They remain lexically related to them, despite selecting different typological options in some respects. I thus ignore the fact that they have been disfranchised—typically for nonlinguistic reasons—by those who assume their own new varieties to be more "normal" developments from the lexifiers and to be the only legitimate dialects thereof. As we know, the "dialect"/"language" distinction has little to do with mutual intelligibility. Besides, several speakers of AAVE and English creoles think they speak English, as stigmatized as

they know their varieties are (Mufwene 1988).<sup>1</sup>

Third, we can address the second aspect of this paper more open-mindedly if we assume that from a genetic point of view we are dealing with what the diachronic literature focusing on language-internal change might present as marked cases, changes induced by contact. I submit, however, that contact may have played a more important role in linguistic change than acknowledged in the literature; contact-induced change may actually be the normal case. The development of French and other Romance languages should not look so peculiar in a continent, viz. Europe, whose history is marked by wars, conquests, migrations, and therefore contacts of all sorts of linguistic groups. Likewise, I submit that the development of North American English may be understood more adequately if approached as a language contact phenomenon.

I use the term "North American English" also for convenience sake. Although AAE may certainly count as North American English, especially to one who does not live in North America, I will follow the tradition which excludes it seemingly by fiat. My reason is simply that I start my discussion by focusing on AAE varieties and their creole kin; thus I may use the term "North American English" for the remaining varieties of English spoken in North America.

Below, to make sense of my thesis that the development of North American varieties of English may be investigated adequately as language contact phenomena, I first summarize critically the state of the art on the genesis of AAE varieties and their New World creole kin (Part 2). After stating my own position in this context, I formulate some questions on the genesis of North American English (Part 3). I hope thus to suggest some new research avenues for American English dialectologists.

## 2. The Genesis of AAE Varieties and their Creole Kin in the New World

I start this section by dismissing partially some myths, while retaining some of their components which I incorporate in the position I propose in the end. I focus only on some genetic accounts which are salient today or bear on the debate in which I am engaged. I discuss them in a order that I find practical in the organization of my discussion, leaving it up to the dates which I cite to establish history. It will become clear that the different hypotheses have not replaced each other, in the sense that every scholar would work in the same paradigm and that everybody would shift to a new position once a shortcoming has been exposed about a previous one. The following discussion will show that from a chronological point of view some positions overlap largely and compete with each other, often without an obvious consensus nor being mutually exclusive.

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<sup>1</sup> To be sure, some African American scholars subscribe to the position that AAE is a separate language, but not a dialect of English. They have thus called it different names, such as Ebonics (Williams 1975, Tolliver-Weddington 1979), Pan-African Language in the Western Hemisphere (Twigg 1973), and Bilalian (Smith, n.d.). However, this ideological sentiment is not shared by the vast majority of African Americans who speak AAE but do not even have a name for it as a separate variety. Many are shocked to learn that linguists have names for it.

### 2.1. *Monogenesis.*

The first myth is that AAE is the continuation of a West-African pidgin English (WAPE) formed already in the sixteenth century (Dillard 1972), which was brought over to the New World by slaves. This monogenetic hypothesis appears earlier in Stewart (1967) and later in a different form in Hancock (1980), as the latter invokes Guinea Coast creole English (GCCE) as a central component in the development of Gullah and Caribbean English creoles. There are several problems with the position, regardless of whether or not the varieties which developed in and from the trading forts of West Africa, most likely in the middle of the seventeenth century, were necessarily or wholly pidgins.

One particular flaw which this monogenetic hypothesis shares with several other competing genetic hypotheses is the assumption that plantations of the New World generally developed overnight in the seventeenth century, that creoles developed from an antecedent pidgin stage, that the drastic disproportion between the Europeans and Africans which accounts in part for the developments of these new vernaculars obtained from the beginnings of the plantations, and/or that both pidgins and creoles had abrupt developments.

History indicates that the earliest New World colonies consisted largely of small homesteads in which the Europeans were the majority, that Africans and Europeans lived fairly intimately during the first phases of these colonies, and that here, as in the forts of West Africa, the initial conditions were not yet conducive to the development of pidgins or creoles as drastically restructured varieties. The large plantations developed gradually, the earliest in the second half of the seventeenth century, as in Barbados, Jamaica, and Haiti, but others in the eighteenth century, as in coastal South Carolina and Guyana. The drastic population disproportions associated with the plantations thus obtained gradually, with a few exceptions (as in Guyana, where the British moved into land already developed by the Dutch), and the language varieties of the different settings consolidated their basilects gradually, not suddenly. No wonder diachronic evidence of creoles wherever they developed does not go earlier than the second half of the eighteenth century. In the case of English creoles, see Lalla and D'Costa (1991).<sup>2</sup>

We must also note that as plantations grew bigger and bigger, the increase of their populations was paralleled by high mortality in the labor force. Thus their populations grew more by importation than by birth (Wood 1974). As segregation was institutionalized, generally within fifty years from the beginning of each colony, social interactions between native and nonnative speakers of the lexifier were reduced essentially to the work place; the conditions were thus ripe for the continuous restructuring of the lexifier. It is apparently the eighteenth century, rather than the seventeenth century, which in several colonies, including North America, saw the speech varieties of Africans and Europeans start to diverge, not the 1970s, as claimed recently by, for instance, Labov and Harris (1986) and Bailey and Maynor (1987). The divergence led to the development of separate norms, concomitantly with the development of separate communities.

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<sup>2</sup> I use "basilect" as a theoretical construct (Mufwene 1987)—not too different from "language" as a theoretical construct (Hagège 1993, Mufwene 1994a)—standing for the variety containing a set-theory union of features which either are not attested or do not have the same distributions in the lexifier.

The above scenario highlights another problem that the Dillard-Hancock-Stewart position shares with several other genetic hypotheses: what did the Africans who did not know WAPE or GCCE before the "Middle Passage" do in the meantime? Did they just learn WAPE or GCCE? Hancock (1986, 1993) suggests, consistently with his "componential" genetic account, that GCCE was just one of the components, not the only one, though it was influential. Perhaps the same may be assumed of WAPE. Given Hancock's explanation, why insist on the greater role of WAPE or GCCE than of other languages which came from Africa in the development of new English vernaculars spoken by descendants of Africans in the New World?

Without necessarily endorsing the Bickertonian position (see below), I submit that insisting on WAPE or GCCE as a necessary stage in the development of English creoles makes it difficult to account for structural similarities between the English varieties and, say, the French varieties, for which no such West African antecedent may be adduced convincingly. Consistent with the Founder Principle which I invoke in Mufwene (1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1993a) and now discuss in detail in Mufwene (1994b), it is possible that WAPE and GCCE made it easier for their speakers to play critical roles in the formation of varieties spoken by earlier creole populations (not necessarily the populations which developed creole language varieties—see, e.g., Baker and Corne 1986). On the other hand, one must wonder whether speakers of WAPE or GCCE preserved them intact in the earlier phases of the developments of plantations, as they interacted intimately with their European masters or cohorts in servitude? Justifiably, Chaudenson (1979, 1989, 1992) argues that in the case of French the slaves spoke "approximations" of what the European colonists spoke, especially their children, who were kept together with those of the European colonists, while the parents developed the physical infrastructure for the plantation system.

Together with other considerations, the above scenario also disputes the hypothesis of an antecedent pidgin to creoles of the New World. History suggests that language shift among the most of the African slaves proceeded directly from African languages to approximations of the lexifiers, which were nonstandard; gradually, approximations of approximations of the lexifiers led to varieties that have been disfranchised as "creoles." Unless one can identify plantations on which African languages survived as vernaculars, not counting later nineteenth-century communities such as the Yoruba in Trinidad (Warner-Lewis 1982), it is hard to identify the vernaculars which the African slaves may have used to communicate, while pidgins putatively served as *lingua francas* among them or between them and the European colonists. We must remember that pidgins are of limited function. As noted in Mufwene's (1992a) reply to Bickerton, it is implausible to assume concomitantly that the Africans had to solve a communication problem among themselves, that a pidgin helped them establish limited communication, and yet they developed new cultures which presuppose communication in vernaculars.

In assuming the above position, I do not mean to deny interlingual varieties which are typical of some acquisition stages. However, interlinguas are understandably transitional, although some of their features crystallize in the vernaculars which replace them. So the one reasonable thing to assume in this scenario is that the lexifier was quickly adopted as a vernacular, which says nothing about the degree of success in acquiring it. We can of course make some inferences about this aspect of its acquisition, based in part on the fact that descendants of Africans do not speak like descendants of Europeans. I return to this more complex question below. Suffice it here to submit that no pidgin antecedent need be posited to account for the development of New World creoles.

## 2.2. *The English-Dialect Hypothesis.*

I identify this myth in Mufwene (1992b) as the dialectologist position. It started as a reaction to racist, physiologically-based speculations advanced especially in Bennett (1908, 1909) and Gonzales (1922) in relation to Gullah. Speaking of AAE, Krapp (1924), Kurath (1928), Johnson (1930), and Crum (1940) countered that the language varieties identified then as "English of the Negro" or "Negro English" were continuations of colonial English formerly spoken by Whites of comparable socio-economic class with whom African slaves had interacted. They claimed that the African Americans had acquired English—i.e., its low-class, nonstandard varieties—so perfectly that there was no trace of African languages left in their speech.

This early dialectologist position is different from the later one assumed by, for instance, McDavid (1950), D'Eloia (1973), and Schneider (1982, 1983, 1993), according to which several elements identified by some as Africanisms in AAE are actually of British origin—via colonial English of course. While McDavid (1950) and Schneider (1993), for instance, leave plenty of room for influence from African languages in AAE, the early dialectologists thought that this influence was negligible. Crum (1940:101) argued that "Gullah is predominantly English, a true English dialect; in fact more truly English than much of the English spoken in America today."

The British origin of the morphemes used in AAE can hardly be disputed. Finding themselves in new socio-economic and political settings, it was a natural adaptive response on the part of the Africans to try to communicate in the local vernacular. In this regard, it does not matter what developed out of these attempts to communicate in it. Thus, the structures of what became their new vernaculars were determined in part by what was spoken by their masters or, more likely, their British cohorts in indentured servitude. This interpretation was well captured by Johnson's (1930:7) statement that

The most numerous class in the colony before the slave trade began to flourish was composed of indentured servants, laborers, and artisans. They worked side by side with the Negroes and came into contact with them in various other ways, and it was from them that the slaves learned most of their English.<sup>3</sup>

However, just as neighborhood integration may now be invoked in North America to account for similarities in the speech of children of white and African-American middle class interacting on a regular basis, or the suburb/inner-city patterns of population distribution to explain white and African-American dialect divergence, segregation, which started in the plantation days, cannot be ignored as an important factor which made it possible for African Americans to develop speech varieties of their own. While we cannot deny that the African slaves and European indentured servants were exposed to similar English inputs, we would be mistaken in ignoring the role which the African languages must have played in determining which particular forms and structural options from among the competing British alternatives would be selected, especially in conditions of interaction which were not equally subject to the Europeans' norms (Mufwene 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1993, to

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<sup>3</sup> According to Menard (1991) and Kulikoff (1991a, 1991b), the indentured labor constituted half to two thirds of the European colonial population.

appear-b). The case of AAE as presented by the early dialectologists would be so unusual, the norm being that when a language has been appropriated as a vernacular by a foreign group it bears the mark of its new proprietors. This observation applies to some extent to North American English, in contrast with its British kin, as English was being appropriated also by immigrants from continental Europe (see below).

Another problem which might easily be overlooked is that the early dialectologists seem to have missed the fact that, as suggested by the social history sketched above, white low-class colonial English is a contact phenomenon that developed concurrently with AAE, not before it. In the particular case of the American Southeast, Europeans and Africans settled at more or less the same time. Large proportions of their populations perished in eighteenth-century plantations and were replaced at more or less the same rates. As new importations of labor created conditions in which new compromises had to be worked out in the direction of new vernaculars, we might assume that white American speech developed as gradually as AAE did. So the following archaism-retention interpretation by Johnson (1930:11) is questionable:

White speech has undergone some degree of change, moving a little nearer, perhaps, toward a standard American English, but, because of cultural isolation, the Negro lags behind, thus conserving the white man's linguistic past.<sup>4</sup>

At best, we may assume that since the colonies started generally with small homestead communities in which Europeans and Africans lived fairly intimately, the varieties to which subsequent importations of slaves and indentured servants were exposed during the development of large plantation communities were similar. Once segregation was institutionalized, white and black vernaculars were subject to different subsets of linguistic and ethnographic pressures and their developments were separate from that time onward, although, because of their common beginnings, they would continue to share some features. The claim that white speech has moved closer to standard English is disputable too, though I will not discuss it here, since this aspect of Johnson's claim is irrelevant to the focus of this paper.

### 2.3. *The African Substrate Hypothesis.*

The early dialectologist position has prompted a different kind of reactionary myth since Turner (1949). The latter criticized dialectologists for failing to compare Gullah with creoles of the Caribbean, both those lexified by English and those lexified by other European languages, and for not taking the systems of African languages into account (13). Having highlighted several structural similarities between Gullah and some African languages, Turner concluded that "Gullah is indebted to African sources" (254). Little did he anticipate that combined with Sylvain's (1936) claim that Haitian Creole was Ewe grammar used with a French vocabulary, his position would develop into the African Substrate Hypothesis, according to which the systems of New World creoles are determined more by the systems of the African languages previously spoken by the African slaves than by their lexifiers or the Language Bioprogram. See, for instance, Allsopp (1977), Alleyne (1971,

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<sup>4</sup> It should help to point out that neither Johnson nor Crum seems to have had much respect for the non-standard English spoken by the indentured servants from the British Isles.

1980, 1986, 1993), Holm (1986, 1988, 1993), Wade-Lewis (1988), DeBose and Faracías (1993), Williams (1993), and Holloway and Vass (1993).<sup>5</sup>

Substratists do not all make identical claims. For instance, they do not all deny, or recognize, the role of the Language Bioprogram in the development of creole languages. So the following comments do not apply universally. To begin with, very few substratists try to account for why only some African languages, notably the (Western) Kwa languages, have emerged as the most significant influence on the structures of New World creoles and AAE. Was it just history which favored this influence due to their majority presence in the earlier stages of the colonies? Yet the same history of the peopling of the colonies also suggests that these new language varieties of the New World developed especially when not West Africans, but Central Africans, most of whom spoke agglutinating Bantu languages, were the majority (e.g., Wood 1974, Rawley 1981, Lovejoy 1982, 1989). Could there be other reasons aside from the West-African earlier majority?

Substratists have also failed to account for some significant structural similarities between New World creoles and some new Central-African language varieties which have developed out of the contacts of predominantly, though not exclusively, Central-African languages, for instance, Kituba and Sango. Without being particularly Bickertonian nor rejecting substrate influence *in toto*, I submit that some principles independent of substrate influence must have been in action. To make my point clearer, note in connection with Kituba that the Bantu languages out of whose contacts it developed are not entirely agglutinating; they have some non-agglutinating alternatives, such as in the expression of personal pronouns and temporal aspect. Thus, as shown in Mufwene (1991a, in press, to appear-c), some process comparable to gene selection in population genetics must have operated in the integration of grammatical features from various sources into the new vernacular. This selection is very evident in, for instance, the less agglutinating nature of Kituba compared to its lexifier, Kikongo-Kimanyanga, which, to begin with, is not perfectly agglutinating. The respects in which Kimanyanga converged with some of the less agglutinating Bantu languages with which it came in contact, for instance, the non-agglutinating expression of temporal aspect, seem to have been favored into Kituba's system. Thus, in this new vernacular all aspectual markers are periphrastic. Likewise, Kituba has no subject verb agreement; like Kiyansi, it relies on non-agglutinated subject pronouns, used in Kimanyanga only in emphatic and/or contrastive constructions. Concomitantly, the contact situation disfavored the less salient agglutinated object pronouns of Bantu languages. The same salient non-agglutinated pronouns are also used as objects in Kituba, with the syntactic position accounting alone for differences in syntactic function. Likewise, principles of simplicity in ethnographic settings where variation must have been confusing dictated the adoption of relative clauses introduced by an invariant connective, functionally almost like the invariant relative complementizer in Kiyansi though based on one of the competing forms in Kikongo.

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<sup>5</sup> Both Turner and Sylvain have been misrepresented. The latter is remembered more by the last sentence of her book than by her analysis which suggests combined influence of African languages (particularly but not exclusively of the Ewe-Fon family) and of French dialects in the development of Haitian Creole. As quoted above, Turner's position did not preclude English grammatical influence, despite his emphasis on African linguistic influence, which was being denied then.

To keep this point short, it seems that generally, in the formation of contact-based language varieties, features of the lexifier which converged with those of the other languages it came in contact with were particularly favored (Thomason 1983), as were those which were more regular, more transparent, simpler, or met any other conditions which identify particular alternatives as less marked (Mufwene 1989, 1991a). Sometimes substrate features prevailed over their counterparts in the lexifier, as is more obvious in Tok Pisin's inclusive/exclusive distinction for the first person plural pronominal reference, its dual/plural distinction in the noun phrase, and its relic of the classifier system with *pela* in the company of numeral quantifiers. We may, for instance, invoke the comparative with *pass*, as in *Jean tall pass he/him buba/breda* 'Jean is taller than her brother' and the associative plural *Pat (an) dem* 'Pat and company' in several New World English creoles as clear evidence of such substrate influence. There are several other such features, many of them creole-specific, which need not be adduced here.

These observations suggest in part that while substrate influence should be obvious in some aspects of new vernaculars of the New World, it need not be seen as necessarily exclusive with superstrate influence. Chances are that in many ways substrate languages and their lexifiers worked concurrently to determine the features of the new language varieties. For instance, the fact that nonstandard English has a definite nominal plural with *them* may be seen as converging with the principle in Kwa languages to form the nominal plural with the third person plural pronoun, although we must agree with substratists that African languages are probably responsible alone for the presence of the associative plural. The latter principle is widespread among African languages, even though the specifics of its syntax vary. Likewise, the fact that relative clauses in nonstandard English typically start not with a relative pronoun but with an invariant relativizer (viz., the complementizer *that*, the null complementizer, or the form *what*) and strand the preposition also accounts for the invariant, complementizer-like relativizer and preposition-stranding in AAE and New World English creoles. As shown in Mufwene (1986b), even among the Bantu languages themselves, there is variation, sometimes language-internal, in the way relative clauses start. It may be a demonstrative variable in form as in Kikongo (Mufwene 1990a), a relative pronoun with a variable form, as in Swahili (in which an invariant relativizer is also acceptable), or an invariant complementizer as in Kiyansi (Mufwene, in press) and in several Kwa languages. With the morphemes generally coming from the lexifier, selection seems to have operated in favor of the option which appeared to be less marked in the contact setting, with convergence among several languages prevailing in the case of relative clauses.

In the case of serial verb constructions (SVC), which have been central in the creole genesis debate, we may mention that the independent loss of inflections must have contributed as much to the prominence of SVCs in creoles as the commonality of the constructions in especially the Kwa languages (however, see also Mufwene to appear-c<sup>6</sup>) and the presence of constructions with *go* or *come* in English with bare infinitives, e.g., *go/come get your paper*.

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<sup>6</sup> Because, unlike Kikongo-Kimanyanga, its lexifier, Kituba does not have the Bantu canonical subject-verb agreement, it has more serial-like verb constructions than are allowed by the historical present in Kikongo. This historical development is similar to loss of inflections in English creoles, which could independently have also produced serial-like constructions in English creoles. Thus *go hunting* would independently become *go hunt* after loss of the inflection *-ing*. Concurrent processes have thus sometimes converged to produce some features whose exclusive origin remains controversial.



Time reference has also figured quite centrally in this debate, especially because the morphosyntactically unmarked verb is interpreted as referring to the past if it is nonstative, but to the present if it is stative. However, the difference is not so drastic between this basic realis tense in creoles and the historical present in English. Also, the simple present tense *I go* is interpreted differently from *I like* with regard to time reference, with the former denoting a habit but the latter depending on context. The periphrastic future with *go*, which is typical of English creoles, is also common in nonstandard English, in the form *going to/gonna* + Verb; so is the perfect construction with *done* + Verb. Likewise, as several studies have now made obvious, some of the nonstandard varieties of English which matter have had their habitative constructions with *do* or *be* (e.g., Rickford 1986, Harris 1991, Montgomery 1989). These features of the lexifier must have converged with similar grammatical patterns among African languages to produce the morphosyntactic strategies associated with creoles.

In short, while substratists are correct in claiming that features of some of the African languages formerly spoken by the African slaves must have influenced the development of the new vernaculars spoken by their descendants in the New World, they seem to have confused the debate in often making it seem like African substrate influence had to prevail exclusively, or like the Africans were determined to develop language varieties which came out as different as possible from their lexifiers. The reality remains that these new vernaculars are results of appropriation of the lexifier by non-native groups. Alleyne's (1971) original position that in relation to their lexifiers, AAE and New World creoles are natural developments marked by what was originally interference from languages previously spoken by those intending to speak the lexifiers (in their colonial forms), as in normal second-language acquisition, seems correct.

#### 2.4. *The Universalist Hypothesis.*

Over the past almost twenty years, the greatest opposition to substratism has come from universalists, best represented by Bickerton (1981, 1984, 1988, 1989, 1992) and his Language Bioprogram Hypothesis. According to this view, creoles were formed by children, who of necessity developed their vernaculars from the chaotic pidgins spoken by their parents. While I believe that some universal principles must have applied, more as mechanisms regulating which particular grammatical features from the lexifier or any other language in contact would be selected into the new linguistic systems (Mufwene 1990, 1991a, 1991b, to appear-b), I have found the rest of the scenario quite at odds with history. As shown above, the pattern of settlements does not seem to have created the requisite conditions for the development of the putative antecedent pidgins after all.

Independently of the above, the hypothesis that only pidgins were spoken by the Africans until the miraculous conditions for nativization qua creolization obtained makes me wonder how the non-creole African slaves communicated outside the plantation labor contexts. Even if some African languages were spoken on the plantations, how widely used were they and which ones?<sup>7</sup> What would

<sup>7</sup> This does not preclude the fact that some Africans speaking a common language (not necessarily native to both) may have spoken them when they met. The question is whether large proportions of people speaking the same language met on the same plantations and used it widely enough to help it prevail as a vernacular while the pidgin served as a lingua franca for specific and limited purposes of communication outside the

have been the ethnographic motivation(s) for retaining them as vernaculars in contact settings which from the start, as in African cities today, favored the development of more neutral vernaculars of wider usage?

As for the pidgins putatively spoken by the parents, they are by definition reduced or underdeveloped languages both structurally and communicatively! Therefore, they could not function as vernaculars. On the other hand, it is hard to assume that African communities in the New World would have formed at all without local vernaculars, which, according to the history of settlements, must initially have been approximations very close to the lexifiers to which the Africans were exposed in the homestead phases. In any case, given similarities between creoles putatively formed by children and those formed by adults, what ground is there for insisting that creoles of New World plantations were necessarily formed by children?

### 2.5. *AAE and the Decreolization Hypothesis.*

Before I move on to articulate my own position on the genesis of AAE and its Caribbean creole kin, as already suggested by the above discussion, I wish to quickly dismiss another position often advanced about AAVE, viz., that it developed by decreolization from a Gullah-like creole formerly spoken by African slaves in former North American British colonies. Aside from being ethnographically unsound, this position too is at odds with history. First of all, Gullah was a special rice field phenomenon, which developed in conditions similar to sugar-cane plantations, which required large slave labor and produced the most drastic disproportions between Europeans and Africans. In British North America (especially in the eighteenth century), these conditions obtained only in coastal South Carolina and Georgia. According to some historians (e.g., Wood 1974, Coleman 1978), 85-90% of African slaves in the eighteenth century lived in the coastal plantations owned by about 5% of the European colonial population.

The Virginia colony, from which most of the labor were (originally) imported to develop cotton plantations in Alabama and Mississippi and with which no Gullah-like creole is associated, was developed almost half a century before South Carolina. According to Kulikoff (1986) and Perkins (1988), most of the Virginia planters preferred indentured servants and did not use much African labor until 1680, seventy-three years after this first North American colony was founded. At the peak of slavery in this colony, the Africans hardly exceeded 30% of the total population. Overall the tobacco and cotton plantations used less labor than the rice fields of coastal South Carolina and Georgia. Besides, the slaves in Virginia were integrated for a longer time, before the institutionalization of segregation (due to homestead living conditions), than in the other two states. The conditions in most of Virginia were thus not conducive to the kind of extensive restructuring of the lexifier associated with creoles.

Even if part of the original slave populations in the South Carolina and Georgia hinterlands, and later in Alabama and Mississippi, had come from creole-speaking areas in the West Indies, is it justified to assume that these people would have stuck to the varieties of their backgrounds while

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group. What would have then been the motivation for the children to adopt the pidgin as their vernacular and nativize it?

living in settings in which they were minorities and in conditions which might have motivated them to speak differently? Is it not more plausible to assume, like Winford (1993), that creole speakers would then have shifted immediately to something closer to present-day AAVE, or closer approximations of the lexifier, in a process that I consider quite different from decreolization as generally claimed in the literature? It seems that different ecological-ethnographic conditions have led to the development of different varieties. In new settings in which different interactive conditions obtained, as in the cotton plantations, and in which language varieties were developing, even people who had spoken creoles previously would have had to adjust to the emerging systems, with their children more likely to make the shift more successfully. This scenario is different from decreolization as a wholesale gradual restructuring of a creole or its basilect in the direction of the acrolect.

As shown by Lalla and D'Costa (1989), Mufwene (1991c, 1994c), and Mille (1990, written after Mufwene 1991a), there is little, if any, diachronic evidence for decreolization as usually claimed in the literature. Even the findings of Rickford (1987) about Guyanese Creole can be reinterpreted as the normal changes which occur in a particular language (Mufwene 1989:126, n. 2), regardless of whether or not it is subordinated to another. There are in any language forms and constructions which older speakers used but have fallen out of fashion. One of the strongest arguments against decreolization, which has hardly been considered, is that members of lower classes do not organize their cultures by emulating those of the upper classes.

An important motivation behind the Decreolization Hypothesis has been variation not only in AAVE but also in the creoles themselves, to which the terms "basilect" and "mesolect" have been applied, the former for varieties which are the most different from the lexifier and the latter for varieties interpreted to reflect approximations of the acrolect or local standard variety of the lexifier. The evidence about this remains controversial. The Samaná and Nova Scotia evidence (Poplack and Tagliamonte 1991, in press; Tagliamonte and Poplack 1988, 1993) suggest no decreolization. The comparisons with West Indian creoles seem misguided, in part because they assume gratuitously a common basilect for the varieties compared and in part because the West Indian creoles are not related to AAE in the same way that Samaná and Nova Scotia African-American varieties of English are. On the other hand, the Liberian Settler English data (Singler 1991a, 1991b) suggest that the nineteenth-century AAE which was taken over to Liberia was not communally as homogeneous as is typically assumed. This does not contradict Poplack and Tagliamonte, although Charles DeBose (p.c. 1994) believes that it really depends on what sample one collects in Samaná.

Misunderstandings about how creoles started account largely for the unjustified assumption that basilects are supposed to be homogeneous and reflect little variation, if any, and that creoles started with them. To begin with, monolithic languages without variation, if there are any natural ones, fall in the category of exceptions. The history of the development of creoles suggests that there must have been a lot of variation at the beginning and even after the creoles had crystallized, regardless of the fact that the development must have been in the direction of basilectalization, not debasilectalization. In the particular case of AAE, it is significant that the sources researched by Brasch (1981) not only expose variation in its structure in the mid-eighteenth century but also suggest that the basi-

lect did not consolidate until toward the end of the century, contrary to Brasch's own interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Thus both Poplack and Tagliamonte's and Singler's analyses seem consistent with the Brasch materials.

Just as the facts suggest that divergence or parallel developments between varieties spoken by descendants of Africans and those spoken by descendants of Europeans started some time in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, depending on the territory, there is no particular reason for assuming decreolization to have affected a mythical Gullah-like variety formerly spoken by African Americans all over the American Southeast to have decreolized. One reason for my assumption is that the slave populations were stratified in ways which provided variable access to colonial native varieties of the lexifier, with, for instance, the house slaves having more exposure to it than the vast majority of field hands. (On the other hand, Lalla and D'Costa 1990 report that several plantation aristocratic women spoke like their slaves!) Another reason is that, variation in individual skills left alone, much depended on who learned the local vernacular from whom among the creole or seasoned slaves and who else they interacted mostly with. At all phases in the development of the colonies, conditions of interaction favored intra-communal variation.

As for the often claimed relative geographical homogeneity of AAVE from one city to another, the Great Black Migration of the turn of the century may account in part for it. The collapse of the Southeastern plantation system in the second half of the nineteenth century and increased need for labor in Northern states during World War I encouraged massive African-American exoduses from the Southeast northwards. There was also exodus for the West with the railroad expansion westward and with the Great Depression of the 1930s. Once in the Northern and Western states, the African Americans, still found themselves segregated in urban ghettos, a type of ecology which allowed African-American southeastern varieties of English to consolidate among themselves (and perhaps with local varieties). As in the Southeast, in the North too there would be varieties closer to white (middle class) English than some others in the African-American communities.

This non-monolithic, variable setup of the urban ethnic variety, as of its ancestors before the late nineteenth century, need not be interpreted as decreolization. Because variation has always been part of the African-American varieties since the inception of the systems, this heterogeneity just means that competition of features need not have resulted in the elimination of some variants nor did it apply in the same way in all speakers. In any case, some of the former defendants of the Decreolization Hypothesis have "shot themselves in the foot" with the divergence hypothesis, which I prefer to interpret as parallel development and on which an informative organized dialogue was focused in Butters (1987).

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<sup>4</sup> Assuming the decreolization scenario, Brasch assumes that the original variation is due in part to inaccurate misrepresentations of AAE. Because of the natural tendency then to disfranchise the speech of Africans, I would have expected exaggerations of non-English features rather than the other way around. It is especially significant that in the reported classified ads on runaway slaves, almost half the runaways are reported to speak (very) good English relative to the prevailing colonial speech. It is equally significant that an important proportion of those slaves described as speaking poor or no English had just arrived or were imported as adults. One of those reported to speak "very good English" was "imported very young" (Brasch 1981:7).

Another important motivation behind the decreolization hypothesis worth mentioning here has been similarities noted since Beryl Bailey (1965) between AAVE and Caribbean English creoles. Later studies pointing out such similarities include Stewart (1967, 1968, 1969, 1974), Rickford (1977), Holm (1976, 1984), Baugh (1980), Mufwene (1983), Winford (1992, 1993). Except for Mufwene (1983), which suggests that the relation may be simply typological, and for Winford (1993), which reinterprets decreolization as the shift from the creole previously spoken by some slaves to the new vernacular that was just emerging, the other studies generally suggest that there was a common or identical basilect from which all New World English creoles started and from which they have been changing.

History does not support the above view, because the contact conditions which obtained in different territories and on different plantations were not identical. For instance, not all plantations started at the same time, nor did they develop at the same speed. There is reason to suspect that the plantations of Guyana may have developed faster than in coastal South Carolina, within about twenty years, although the former colony started later, around 1740, as opposed to 1670 in South Carolina. More details on the pattern of settlements should be forthcoming.

The demographic sizes of the plantations were smaller in North America than in the Caribbean (Curtin 1990), just as they differed between the rice fields, on the one hand, and tobacco and cotton plantations, on the other, as noted above. Besides, it is a fallacy to assume that importing slaves from a previously developed plantation or colony to develop another entailed the continuation of the variety spoken in the previous plantation or colony. Things depended very much on, among other things, what the initial demographic size and composition of the new plantation or colony would be like, how long this initial phase would last, and what patterns of interaction obtained within the founder population during this initial period. Although we still depend very much on missing diachronic evidence, history suggests that no common cross-territory English basilect could possibly have developed that was spoken universally by Africans in all British colonies. Invoking decreolization to account for variation today among creoles and between them and AAVE is also inconsistent with the suggestion from history that the new vernaculars developed in the direction of basilectalization, not debasilectalization.

## 2.6. *What History Suggests: A Competition-of-Feature Hypothesis.*

Having questioned what appears to be a long list of hypotheses on the genesis of vernaculars spoken by descendants of Africans in the New World, I now wish to propose an account of my own for their developments. I focus first on rice field and sugar cane plantation phenomena before turning to AAVE, what I take to be a tobacco and cotton plantation phenomenon, without overlooking the effect of the Great Migration mentioned above.

The plantations of the New World developed in phases, starting with small homesteads, in which Africans and Europeans lived fairly intimately (Wood 1974), with some of the homesteads gradually changing into large plantations. It generally took 30 to 50 years for a territory to switch from a predominantly trade and small farming system to the plantation system as the dominant industry and the principal employer of slave and indentured labor. (Suriname and Guyana may be important exceptions whose large plantations developed in about 20 years.) Although the plantations used most

of the African slaves (85%-90%), still a proportion of them, however small, were used on small farms or as helpers for some traders. Segregation was generally instituted when Africans became the majority, more significantly where plantations prevailed than elsewhere.

With segregation started separate developments of black and white speech varieties, although they were bound to share a few features not only because of interactions between the two groups at work but also because they had basically the same lexifier consisting originally of nonstandard varieties of English (spoken most obviously by farmers, artisans, and indentured servants). Creolization qua basilectalization of the disfranchised varieties spoken by Africans and their descendants peaked during the periods of maximal growth for the plantations, typically before the abolition of slavery and when the plantation populations grew more by importation of new slaves than by birth (Wood 1974). This is also a period when mortality rate was high, among both adults and children. The influx of newcomers, which quickly outnumbered the creole populations, favored the basilectalization process, i.e., restructuring away from the lexifier.

However, social stratification among the slaves, with some of them interacting more regularly with the European colonists than others did, produced lectal variation spectra known as creole continua. Also the fact that not all African slaves lived on plantations favored the development of the variable speech patterns among African Americans. In North America, the concentration of rice field along the coast lay the groundwork for differences between Gullah and what developed in the hinterlands, differences which may be interpreted as regional. The fact that in the nineteenth century a large proportion of the African captives were children (Lovejoy 1989) must have slowed down the restructuring, as the children were more likely to acquire the local varieties successfully. The developments of AAE and its creole kin were thus not uniform phenomena.

On the other hand, the fact that the period of plantation growth coincided with the time when most slaves came from Central Africa, where the Bantu languages are spoken, raises interesting questions about the high proportion of structural parallelisms with Kwa features rather than Bantu features. The earlier Kwa prevalence may be ruled out as significant because their dominance was during the phases of the development of the colonies during which closer approximations of the lexifiers were spoken. We must thus think of selection and principles regulating this process, on the model of population genetics.

The proposed approach is favored also by the fact that new language varieties which developed out of the contact of mostly Bantu languages such as Kituba are less agglutinating and thus do not reflect the complex morphosyntax typically presented as the Bantu canon. Features associated with Melanesian pidgins which reflect Melanesian linguistic influence also make more compelling the case for the selection model, an ecological approach in terms of Mufwene (to appear-b). In this model, the bioprogram works not as an alternative to substrate or superstrate elements but as a body of principles regulating which of the competing options from the lexifier and the other languages in contact, the only parties in competition, get selected into the new language variety (Mufwene 1990, 1991a, 1991b, to appear-b). Given similarities between the development of these contact-induced vernaculars and second-language acquisition phenomena, as noted by several contributors to Andersen (1983), the workings of the Language Bioprogram, interpreted as Universal Grammar, need not be limited to children.

As things stand, substrate influence interpreted as the role played by substrate languages in determining which features of any of the languages in contact would be selected into the lexifier was very likely in AAVE and New World creoles. The proportion of features which may be traced exclusively to substrate languages, in a similar fashion to Melanesian features in Melanesian pidgins, may be limited and must vary from one language variety to another, depending on diverse ethnographical and historical factors. However, there is no particular reason for restricting African linguistic influences to such cases, in part because we know that New World English creoles are different from Melanesian pidgins but closer to both West African English pidgins and New World creoles lexified by other European languages. An important reason for the similarities is that more or less the same kind of English came in contact with more or less the same kinds of African languages on both sides of the Atlantic.

However, in the Melanesia, different types of languages came in contact with more or less the same kind of English that was also brought over to the New World. This accounts for differences between the Atlantic phenomena and their Melanesian counterparts. On the other hand, substrate influence as interpreted above accounts for how more or less the same kinds of languages in different settings would have favored similar selections from the lexifiers of the new vernaculars. Note that although the latter language varieties sometimes differ lexically, e.g., English and French creoles, there are several similarities among their variable grammatical systems. Thus, in addition to typological similarities among the lexifiers, African languages remain a critical factor in determining the forms and structures selected into the new vernaculars; they explain in part why the latter are different from the vernaculars spoken by descendants of Europeans. So substrate influence should not sound like an outrageous explanation, as long as it is not exclusive for the development of language varieties spoken by descendants of Africans in the New World.

Likewise, superstrate influence seems obvious in part because varieties lexified by nonstandard varieties of English around the world exhibit similarities which distinguish them from those lexified by standard or educated ones. For instance, like their nonstandard lexifiers, English creoles have a PERFECT aspect with *done* rather than the *have* + Past Participle construction, an anterior tense with *bin*, a nominal plural with *dem*, and relative clauses with an invariant relativizer. The first task is thus to articulate the ecological qua sociohistorical and ethnolinguistic conditions of the development of the new vernaculars and figure out specifics of the principles which regulated the selection of forms and structures. I have already suggested, after Thomason (1983) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988), that the features which converged tended to have selective advantage in the competition. I have also proposed factors such as semantic transparency, generality, regularity, uniformity, simplicity, statistical frequency, and salience as factors determining markedness values favoring or disfavoring some alternatives (Mufwene 1989, 1991a). The list of factors remains open to additions and/or adjustments for the language-restructuring equation mentioned above.

An interesting aspect of this model is that it makes the best use of notion of mixing. I adopt here the position which has been bashed as the "Cafeteria Principle," notably by Dillard (1970) in reaction to the Dialectologist Position on the development of AAVE and by Bickerton (1981) in reaction to the Substrate Hypothesis. Assuming that virtually all linguistic systems are mixed to some extent (Hjelmslev 1938)—in part because they display typological inconsistencies (some of which may be due to contacts) and because their competing rules often overlap (Mufwene 1992d)—the model proposed here supposes that there was no problem with selecting features from diverse linguistic

sources and reorganizing them into a new mixed system, as long as the selection was principled. I submit below that the development of varieties of American English other than AAE probably proceeded in a way not too different from the proposed scenario.

However, note that the above seemingly straightforward formula for the development of AAVE and New World creoles is complicated by some other factors including migrations. The latter bear especially on the development of AAVE, which is claimed by several scholars to be relatively homogeneous, at least from a morphosyntactic point of view, from the inner cities of the North to rural areas of the Southeast.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. The Development of White Varieties of American English: A Creole Perspective

The basic position here is not necessarily to treat White American English as a creole. None of the explanations proposed above for varieties of English spoken by descendants of Africans in the New World depends on the premise that they are creoles. My proposal is simply to discuss North American English as a contact phenomenon, highlighting genetic similarities and differences between it and AAVE and New World English creoles.

What has prompted this proposal is, to begin with, the fact that North American English is different from British English, just as it differs from AAE. Interestingly, in several parts of the Southeast, including South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi, Europeans and Africans arrived at more or less the same time, although in places such as Virginia and New England, a decade or so lapsed between the arrival of the Europeans first and then of the Africans. Even though in the Southeast one may argue that the differences between European-American and African-American speech are slight, Rickford (1985) shows that the similarities may be superficial only. The seemingly similar European-American and African-American English vernaculars may well be underlain by different grammatical systems. Wolfram (1974) suggests the same thing.

Also, despite my observation in section 2.6 that AAE varies regionally, it is still less heterogeneous—especially if differences between Gullah and AAVE are overlooked—than North American English vernaculars. There are significant regional differences which call for an explanation too, or at least they deserve investigating genetically.

Part of the explanation for the above observations is that African Americans have not interacted with European Americans the same way that the latter have interacted among themselves. Segregation has prevented them from developing the same varieties as European-Americans. Even though language contact was involved in the case of European Americans as in the case of African Americans, not the same kinds of languages were likely to bear significant consequences in both groups. African languages were more likely to influence structures of AAE one way or another than

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<sup>9</sup> On a recent visit to Louisiana in November 1994, I noticed that African Americans from the bayou area sounded different, at least prosodically, in a way somewhat reminiscent of coastal South Carolina or the Bahamas. Even in the choice of some lexical items they differ from varieties typically identified as AAVE, although I could not quite identify their speech as Gullah-like. Troike (1973) had already recommended that scholars look into regional differences.



they could influence European-American English.

However, there are other questions to address, especially because European-American varieties of English have generally been considered less restructured than AAE. If this observation is accurate, how can we account for the difference? Why did the Germans, the Dutch, and the French not affect English in the same way as the African languages seem to have among African Americans? Note, for instance, that the New Netherland (including parts of New Jersey and New York) was initially a Dutch colony and its trade to the British did not entail that the Dutch, Germans, and French who were in the colony left it (Dillard 1992, Buccini 1994). As also observed above, the Germans were among the early indentured servants in other North American colonies such as Virginia.

It is easy to give too simplistic an answer to the last question. One important factor which should not be overlooked regarding the Europeans' ability to learn English is the fact that living conditions did generally not prevent those from continental Europe from having constant exposure to native varieties of English. Ethnic divisions among Europeans do not seem to have been as prohibitive to acquisition of native-like English as segregation between people of European and African descents. Besides, there are several systemic similarities among Western European languages (Thomason 1983), perhaps more so than with the African languages they came in contact with in the New World. The differences between African-American and European-American speech cannot thus be explained by differences in learning skills.

Note also that during the critical periods when AAE and creole varieties developed, non-creole Africans (those not born in the colonies) quickly dominated demographically, creating the right conditions for extensive restructuring. On the other hand, the massive essentially continental European immigrations of the nineteenth century took place more gradually and white colonial varieties of English may have stabilized already. Consistently with the founder principle, according to which the structural features of the new vernaculars were largely determined by those of the founder populations, whatever changes some newly arriving groups effected on the local varieties may be considered peripheral, under circumstances in which the founder populations were not suddenly eclipsed demographically by the newcomers.

Nonetheless, as noted above, the Germans constituted a non-negligible proportion of the indentured servants of the seventeenth century (Kulikoff 1991, Menard 1991), the period in which we may locate the founder populations. Leaving alone the Old Amish Order's English variety, what German contributions may be counted in the structure of general American English? Similar questions may be asked of the Dutch and the French. Is there German influence as significant in North American English as African influence in AAE? Did these founder populations contribute to the development of new dialects in North America? Note that these do not match the dialects which came from the British Isles?

Can we answer the question of why North American English is different from British English without addressing these aspects of the founder populations and the effects they may have had on the development of North American varieties? Under the circumstances, can some of us continue to assume that American Southern English, as the variety spoken in the American Southeast, is what it is only because of the influence of the Africans, even when at least eighty percent of the white

population's children did not have African-American nannies?

Southern English set aside, it has often been claimed that North American English varieties are vestiges of varieties of English in the British Isles during the colonial period. Putatively isolation by the Atlantic Ocean made it impossible for the Americans to participate in the changes that have affected British English. There are undoubtedly some regional varieties in which influence from particular parts of the British Isles is significant, for instance, Appalachian English (Montgomery 1989, to appear; Montgomery et al. 1994). Still one must not only determine whether the global systems of their vernaculars match those of the regions from which most of their speakers came but also account for what happened in urban centers such as New York, Chicago, Boston, and the like. So far no answers have been provided to these questions.

We also hear a lot about the influence Irish and Scotch-Irish English on New World varieties of English, which accounts for some features selected by several of the vernaculars. However, as important as the influence from these ethnic groups may be, what factors account for intergroup and interregional differences among the North American or New World groups? Would it not be informative to learn what favored the selection of *some* (Scotch-)Irishisms but blocked other influences which the same ethnic varieties could have exerted on North American English and the like?

In other words, did North American English not develop as a contact phenomenon, like AAE and its creole kin? This question is interestingly addressed by Montgomery (to appear). He argues correctly against claims that colonial American English was homogeneous. These claims are equally disputed by what the history of settlements tells us about the typically isolated nature of plantations and small farms, the social and linguistic contrasts which must have obtained between these communities, and the fact that, as Montgomery also observes, new immigrants tended to go where they had relatives or people from the same background. One particular problem I find with the koineization position aptly criticized by Montgomery is its characterization in terms of leveling. When in contact, dialects of a language do not level out in the way that a surface may be leveled by losing its peaks and filling in its gaps. In dialect contact, as in any other kind of linguistic contact, features compete with each other. While some of them emerge as less marked and get selected into the new contact setting's variety, others are not selected into the system, the same kind of thing we observe in the development of creole language varieties. Montgomery is right in observing that this selection was gradual, that colonial speech was variable and not monolithic, and that we should try to understand "the social dynamics of colonial dialect and language contact situations that may well explain a greater diversity in speech patterns than the [early, eighteenth-century] koineization hypothesis usually allows for."

I have insisted especially on the effect of the founder populations not because this is the only phase that matters in the development of North American English but because it makes things more manageable in starting from the first phase and retracing history. I am sure the migrations of the nineteenth century have also affected North American English. The question is how or to what extent? Adding to complexity in this genetic scenario is what influence was exerted on English in states such as Louisiana and Texas, where French and Spanish speakers had to shift to English. Are these later shifts different from that of the Dutch in the New Netherland?

As stated at the outset, I have no answers to most of these questions. Research on pidgin and

creole genesis has helped me tease out the above relevant aspects of the development of North American English. Without having to characterize the diverse varieties it consists of as creoles or koinés, we cannot deny the fact that we are dealing here with contact-induced varieties. Therefore the same considerations which have helped us understand what seems to have happened in development of AAE and New World creoles may very well help us understand how North American varieties of English have developed. The research avenues opening up here should shed light not only on the formation of these particular varieties but also on the dynamics of genetic ramifications of languages, in this case, those which have produced diverse daughters of the English language around the World.

#### 4. Conclusions

The position presented in this paper may be summed up as follows. Since the early colonial days, English in the New World has been used in novel kinds of ethnographic settings characterized not only by its contact with other languages but also by the way dialects from the British Isles came to coexist with each other. The British dialects no longer had the same geographical distributions as at home. In differing colonial settings, demands of communication set their features to compete with each other in ways which produced new colonial varieties. For instance, the high visibility or prominence of the (Scotch-)Irish demographic element in some parts of North America increased the likelihood of significant linguistic influence from the relevant ethnic varieties. In addition to this competition, we must also consider the presence of several non-English language varieties. Differences in the demographic representations of different linguistic varieties must have led to differences in the specific subsets of features selected into the new colonial varieties; and different selections of features account for differences in the new varieties of English which developed, be they those traditionally treated as "normal transmissions" of English from the British Isles, such as those identified here as North American English, or those disfranchised varieties identified here as AA(V)E and creoles.

Focusing on competition of linguistic features, worth noting in the case of speakers who were shifting to English is that they aimed at speaking another language. This factor must have reduced the possible influence from their ethnic languages to cases of interference which they could not repress. The role of competition from these languages consists primarily, though not exclusively, in how they influenced the selection of features from among the competing features from the British varieties in different settings. To put it in a different way, form and structure competed in the case of dialects from the British Isles, whereas mostly structure bore on the competition in the case of language varieties from outside the British Isles. Otherwise changes in the demographic significance of speakers of typologically different systems bore variably on the emerging systems in different settings according to the same principles of markedness discussed in Mufwene (1989, 1991a).

Another important factor in all this is whether a particular ethnolinguistic group was or was not part of the founder population, which affects the conditions under which it may have affected the new varieties of English, creole and noncreole. We must of course keep in mind that particular kinds of interethnic interaction, for instance whether or not the groups were segregated, generally affected the direction of linguistic restructuring. Thus the segregation of the Africans maximized the role of African languages in shaping AAE and creoles, in addition to the rapid population replacement in the eighteenth century due to high mortality rate and the sustained massive importation of slave la-

bor. Otherwise, I submit that in all cases the same language restructuring equation operated in which the different factors discussed above functioned as algebraic variables. Differences in the values assumed by particular variables in diverse settings account for differences in the particular varieties that have developed. In short, AAE, Caribbean English creoles, and North American varieties of English are all outcomes of language contact; the same methodology may be developed and similar research questions may be addressed in attempting to account for similarities and differences among them.

I conclude this paper with a caveat on an important aspect of the development of all new varieties of English in the New World which I have not addressed, viz., the contribution of native American languages beyond the lexicon.<sup>10</sup> This remains an "unknown quantity" on which there is so far too limited information for me to speculate on, especially regarding the varieties spoken by descendants of Africans. Aside from settings such as Virginia, where the initial contacts had been between Europeans and native Americans, before the Africans became "part of the scene," the slaves who escorted fur traders were also involved in communication between the Europeans and native Americans. On the other hand, the Africans often established their own relations with them, as crystallized by communities such as the Afro-Seminole. Communication between the two groups may often have been in some form of English. Little has been said about this aspect of the development of new vernaculars in the New World. We definitely should learn more about it.

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<sup>10</sup> I thank Emanuel Drechsel for raising this question at the conference, at the end of my presentation.

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